I chose this meme because it is significant to my experience during the COVID-19 pandemic as a “COVID Senior.” At the start of COVID-19, I was starting the second semester of my senior year. The seniors were told our spring break would be extended for two extra weeks, right? At initial, yes, it was fantastic to have that additional two weeks off of school to spend time with friends and family. However, by the end of the 3-week break, the country had gone into lockdown, and only essential businesses were open. We soon realized that we wouldn’t be able to finish our senior year and all the exciting experiences that come with being a Senior, such as prom, senior skip day, senior field day, and even graduation. To add to the disappointment, this LOVELY new phenomenon… social distancing. Social distancing, while effectively slowing the spread of COVID-19, also meant that we couldn’t be within 6 feet of anyone not in our household, meaning not hanging out with friends. Being a social butterfly myself, this took a significant toll on my mental health. Surrounding myself with friends, being able to go to places, and making memories has always been an important part of my life, and the pandemic put a pause on all of that. The pandemic was one of the first times I had ever struggled with my mental health. Being home 24/7 with virtually nothing to do but watch TV, shop online, scroll on social media, and watch the world go to hell in a handbasket led to the development of my anxiety and depression, which I still struggle with to this day.

In addition to not finishing my senior year of high school, I also started college amidst the pandemic. My freshman year of college was unlike anything any previous classes had experienced. My entire summer consisted of dorm shopping, registering for courses, and being excited about life getting back to normal. I moved into the dorms, started classes, some virtual and a few in-person, and for two weeks, life was normal. Then, they sent us home to finish the semester online. Virtual learning became the new normal for the next two years. I can sum virtual learning up in four words: Lockdown Browser and Zoom Meetings. I am now a junior, and this is the first “normal” year of college with in-person classes, no mask or social distancing requirements, and COVID protocols have just become common courtesy.

In conclusion, this meme is the PERFECT representation of my experience with the COVID-19 pandemic because it has felt like it has been going on for eight years. Even though everything seems to be returning to life pre-COVID, there are still some residual trends and effects of the pandemic we are seeing almost four years later in health care and everyday life. Hopefully, we as a society have learned from this collective experience. If anything like this were to occur again, preferably not for a very long time, we would be more prepared and equipped to handle all the twists and turns it has to throw at us.